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### The Effects of a Regular Yoga Practice on Psychophysiological Measures in College Students

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College aged students experience a developmentally challenging transition that increases the risk of developing mental and physical health issues. When practiced regularly, yoga has been shown to have favorable psychological and physiological effects which may help to alleviate the burden of these physical and mental health issues in the collegiate population. Specifically, a regular yoga practice has been shown to have favorable effects on stress, anxiety, and cardiovascular measures. **PURPOSE** The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that 12 weeks of a regular Ashtanga yoga practice (150 minutes/week) would improve measures of cardiovascular and psychological health in college students. **METHODS** Twenty-two college students ( $21 \pm 1.2$  yrs; 21 female) participated in this study. Height, weight, waist/hip circumference, resting blood pressure and heart rate, fasting blood glucose and cholesterol, and psychological health (STAI form Y-1 and Y-2) were assessed prior to the end of the third week of the semester (PRE). Subjects participated in their Yoga I class throughout Fall semester. After the 12<sup>th</sup> week of class, participants reported to the laboratory for follow up testing (POST). **RESULTS** A significant improvement in trait anxiety (Y-2), assessing participants' disposition to develop anxiety as a part of their personality, was observed after 12 weeks of a regular yoga program (PRE:  $39 \pm 2$  vs POST:  $34 \pm 1.8$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). There was no change in state anxiety (Y-1), assessing participants' levels of anxiety "in the moment" (PRE:  $34 \pm 1.7$  vs POST:  $33 \pm 1.9$ ;  $p = 0.96$ ). There was also no change in weight, waist/hip circumference, resting heart rate (PRE:  $67 \pm 2.4$  vs POST:  $66 \pm 1.7$  bpm), resting blood pressure (PRE<sub>SYS</sub>:  $109 \pm 2.2$  vs POST<sub>SYS</sub>:  $107 \pm 2.2$  mmHg; PRE<sub>DIA</sub>:  $67 \pm 1.9$  vs POST<sub>DIA</sub>:  $64 \pm 1.7$  mmHg), fasting blood glucose (PRE:  $90 \pm 1.8$  vs POST:  $90 \pm 2$  mg/dL), or cholesterol (PRE:  $176 \pm 12$  vs POST:  $172 \pm 9.3$  mg/dL) measurements. **CONCLUSION** 12 weeks of regular practice in a beginner Ashtanga yoga program improved measures of (personality) trait-anxiety in college students.